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STATE PASS USAID/OFDA

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR TRANSNISTRIA DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

REF: CHISINAU 01039

¶1. (SBU) I am declaring a disaster in the Transnistrian region of Moldova due to severe drought, loss of crops, and consequent negative impact on living standards. I hereby request \$50,000 from USAID/OFDA for disaster relief in Transnistria.

¶2. (SBU) This request follows reftel in which I requested emergency assistance for drought-affected Moldova. OFDA funds provided in response to that request (\$50,000 initially, plus \$200,000 subsequently) were coupled with Mission bilateral funding (\$100,000) for the acquisition and delivery of seeds for the fall 2007 planting of winter wheat and barley in right-bank Moldova. In sum, 518 tons of wheat seed and 100 tons of barley seed were secured and distributed to 1,539 smaller-scale commercial growers. Those seeds are now in the ground and will yield the spring harvest. Five central regions were targeted: Orhei, Singerei, Telenesti, Rezina, and Soldanestu.

¶3. (SBU) This declaration and request is specific to the break-away region of Transnistria, which was not included in the OFDA assistance provided to right-bank Moldova. All indications are that Transnistria has been at least equally affected by the drought which Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin declared in July to be a disaster. Like the rest of Moldova, local resources in Transnistria are insufficient to respond effectively to the impact of the drought. The speaker of the Transnistrian "parliament" requested USG assistance in a conversation with me on November 9, 2007.

¶4. (SBU) Transnistria, with a population of 580,000, is located within the internationally recognized borders of Moldova, mostly to the east of the Nistru River. A ceasefire has held since the civil war in 1992, but the territory's political status remains undetermined. Transnistria's authoritarian, pro-Russian secessionist authorities control this portion of Moldovan territory (including weapons factories and other industrial facilities). In the past, the USG has had little interaction with Transnistrians. The appeal for USG assistance from the Transnistrian authorities is unusual and significant. Assisting Transnistria at this crucial moment will show U.S. moral and humanitarian support for the people there and facilitate dialogue with the Transnistrians that the USG is actively trying to engage and coax into dialogue. We have a unique opportunity to build goodwill and to improve prospects for further work in Transnistria. For these reasons, I believe it is in our national interest to provide assistance to Transnistria during this time of need.

¶5. (SBU) Like most of Moldova, the impact of drought in Transnistria has been especially hard on cereal crops, pasture and fodder for livestock. A September 25 report by the FAO/WFP describes the 2007 drought as having a "severe" impact on the agricultural sector of Moldova, which directly or indirectly supports more than 60 percent of the population and 70 percent of the poor. Overall, crop production is reported to have been reduced by an average of 60 percent; in some cases entire crops were lost. Transnistrian

authorities have expressed particular concern over escalating food prices. This increase comes on top of utility cost increases of more than 30 percent this year. Now, as food prices have risen, living standards have declined from an already low level. Moldova is the poorest country in Europe.

¶6. (SBU) The plan for assisting Transnistria is built on the Mission's experience in disbursing OFDA funds already provided to right-bank Moldova. Post, through our USAID office, will grant OFDA funds to USAID's implementing partner CNFA (Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs) to purchase and distribute corn seed. The seed is needed for the spring 2008 planting season. To meet planting deadlines, the seed should be distributed no later than early April ¶2008. In addition to OFDA funding of corn seed, USAID and CNFA are exploring prospects for reprogramming ongoing bilateral resources to better engage associations of Transnistrian farmers in a program of longer-term assistance.

¶7. (SBU) The Mission is coordinating with other donors in the provision of drought recovery assistance to Transnistria, though to date no other donors have provided assistance. UNDP is considering providing animal fodder to households.

¶8. (SBU) While my request at this time is for \$50,000 from OFDA, it is evident that the need is substantial and that additional resources could be effectively programmed. Any additional OFDA assistance to address drought recovery in Transnistria would be welcomed.

KIRBY